

Environmental Advisory Council

Tuesday April 27, 2021

12:00 pm

The regular monthly meeting of the Environmental Advisor Council (EAC) was held VIRTUALLY on the above date and time.

EAC Members Present: S. Case, D. Beane, A. Sellers, C. Curran-Myers, W. Vitale, L. Sihelnik

Others Present: B. Murray, S. Rugis, K. Himmelright, R. Johnson, B. Ayers-Fisher

Call to Order

Mr. Case called the regular meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council to order at 12:05 pm. A quorum was present.

Public Comment

None

Introduce Guests

Mr. Case thanked Ms. Ayers-Fisher for her excellent and energetic efforts to organize and publicize numerous Earth Day events, activities and learning last week. Programs aired on BCTV were highlighted by Mr. Case. Mr. Beane noted that it may provide a platform and ideas for future EAC programming. Mr. Case asked guests to introduce themselves.

Non-Use Aquifer Designation and Ordinance

Ms. Curran-Myers introduced Deb Millman from the Greater Reading Chamber and Andrew Fetterman from Liberty Environmental for discussion of Non-Use Aquifer Designation and Ordinance to facilitate redevelopment within the City. Mr. Beane and Ms. Curran-Myers met with them on this issue before the March EAC meeting, and reported on their favorable impression. After discussion during the March meeting the EAC invited Ms. Millman and Mr. Fetterman to attend the April meeting to present more detail.

Ms. Millman and Mr. Fetterman presented their proposal to work in a public private partnership to produce the data and survey needed to ascertain the extent to which the groundwater in the City is used for potable or agricultural purposes. EAC members and partners asked questions about benefits to the City, current knowledge about extent of groundwater use in the City, costs, resources needed, and next steps. Mr. Rugis asked if we could provide a white paper for Facility's review. Mr. Murray provided some information about existing uses outside the RAWA system. Mr. Beane and Ms. Curran-Myers expressed their support of the initiative and proposed that the EAC work with Ms. Millman to produce a short white paper for review by City agencies and stakeholders.

Motion was made by Ms. Curran-Myers, seconded by Mr. Beane, expressing preliminary support of the proposal and direction to provide information and outreach to City partners to seek feedback. Motion adopted unanimously.

Review Old Business/ Provide Project Updates

- Signage/Mapping Proposal, Funding (*Ann Sellers, Cathy Curran-Myers*)

Ms. Sellers, Mr. Vitale and Ms. Ayers-Fisher reported on the logo development and the need to simplify the concept. Ms. Ayers-Fisher will work on getting some ideas together to work with a private firm. Ms. Curran-Myers will thank Mr. Crespo and Ms. Ayers-Fisher will take steps to develop an alternate approach using EAC in graphic style.

- Invasive Plants / Noxious Weeds (*Cathy Curran-Myers*) Ms. Curran-Myers reported that developments in the last few months dictated that we adjust our schedule and strategy for finalizing an Invasive Plant and Noxious Weed Ordinance to address both responsibilities under the State Act of 2017 and also the escape of invasive species from illegal yard waste dumping that has been occurring in preservation areas such as the Mt. Penn Preserve. Ms. Curran-Myers presented concerns about the disposal of lumber waste from tree removal and the timing of putting out an ordinance beefing up yard waste disposal prohibitions when extensive tree debris disposal occurred in recent months and impacted the same area. Invasive species is related and outreach is probably needed. Mr. Rugis offered to assist with getting consistent policies for better disposal practices in City tree removal/trimming contracts. Ms. Curran-Myers will develop a revised plan for going forward including some outreach and discussion with Ms. Smith and Ms. Kelleher.

Extensive disposal of timbering waste along Oak Lane disposed of large quantities of wood chips, sawdust and similar debris on the bank and into the woods, both unsightly and inconsistent with best practices for ecological health. Ms. Curran-Myers recommended she work on outreach and education with neighborhood groups and will contact Ms. Kelleher for advice. She suggested holding some tours to show the extensive yard waste disposal along Oak Lane and the resulting invasive plants supplanting the native species.

- Urban Agriculture / Victory Garden Task Force

Councilor Sihelnik thanked the EAC for their help with the Victory Garden Task Force networking and collaboration last year and for continuing forward on the focus on an Urban Agriculture initiative for 2021-22. Councilor Sihelnik announced that grants have been awarded to the Berks County Conservation District that would fund an Urban Agriculture Coordinator position to develop networks among stakeholders and develop programming. The Coordinator is Juan Bol. Additional positive developments will be announced soon.

- Climate Resiliency Plan/ Clean Energy Plan (*Scot Case, Bill Vitale*) Mr. Vitale reported that he met with Mr. Denbowski and the City Managing Director to discuss moving forward on policies for sustainability and Clean Energy that were underway now that new staff is on board. Mr. Vitale reported on meeting with Facilities and Mr. Denbowski to have an hour and a half meeting to discuss what has occurred to date on Clean Energy Plans and implementation of the policy decisions that have already been made, now that new staff are onboard. Once the

Sustainability Coordinator position is filled, all agreed would be an ideal time to get everyone together to take stock.

Mr. Rugis agreed plans are afoot to talk about how the City can move forward on more sustainability projects. Seeking federal funding, he expects a number of green initiative grants. He noted the City has received a \$30 million estimate for modernizing infrastructure.

- Lead Abatement Coalition (*David Beane, Bill Murray*) Mr. Murray reported that they are moving forward to try for the smaller \$3 Million Grant with EPA to do an environmental justice focused program for lead abatement, somewhat scaled back from the original plans a year ago, but something that could be complete in 3 years and a good start. Mr. Murray also reported a collaboration with Penn State on a water system evaluation focusing on environmental justice communities like ours. Mr. Murray noted helpful assistance from Mr. Abodalo on these projects.

Review bike-rack items:

- Process/rules for membership (*Shelly Smith*) Mr. Case reported in response to questions from Mr. Vitale and Mr. Johnson that he did not know the status of applications currently in process to fill the two vacant positions in the EAC. We need Shelly.

Reorganization: Motion was made by Ms. Sellers, seconded by Mr. Beane, to confirm the EAC leadership for 2021 of Scot Case Chairman and David Beane Vice Chairman. Cathy Curran-Myers will serve as Green Infrastructure Committee Chair. Passed without objection.

- *NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, May 25 at noon*

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Curran-Myers
Secretary Pro Temp